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ABSTRACT

Part D of Public Law 90-576 and other federal mandates have authorized the use of funds for exemplary projects and programs in vocational education. Despite the investment of funds, recent studies have found little evidence of impact. Therefore, a project was conducted to identify what administrative techniques or organizational arrangements were likely to result in the continuation of the exemplary project on site when outside funds are no longer available and in the program being implemented in school districts other than the host district. Following the identification of administrative and organization variables and the development of a conceptual framework, two questionnaires were developed for two different populations. These populations were exemplary project directors from projects funded between July 1, 1970 and June 30, 1978, and replication sites using results from the funded exemplary projects. Eleven findings of the study tended to corroborate findings from other research. Sites most likely to continue the exemplary projects tended to collect evaluation data more frequently than those sites less likely to continue. Continuation was associated with the use of experienced project directors and frequent inservice for staff. Local school districts were the primary source of funds for continuation of demonstration projects. Transportability of project results usually occurred through administrative channels, and technical assistance to replication sites occurred on a limited basis. (JH)

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THE CONTINUATION OF EXEMPLARY PROJECTS

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The Continuation of Exemplary Projects

William L. Hull[1]

This paper is based on a project sponsored by the U. S. Office of Education and conducted at The Center for Research on Vocational Education in 1976. It contains the salient research findings from this project and a brief discussion of the conceptual framework developed for the purpose of identifying independent variables likely to influence the continuation of exemplary projects. A section on methodology is included.

The Parameters of the Problem

Since 1968 (Public Law 90-576) the Federal government has authorized the use of funds for exemplary projects and programs in vocational education. This section of the law, commonly known as Part D, has been and continues to be one of the principle means of introducing and spreading innovations in vocational education. Activities similar to this program of exemplary projects in vocational education have been conducted under other Federal mandates for programs such as ESEA Title III innovative projects and the developer-demonstration projects in the National Diffusion Network. Despite this investment of funds, recent studies have found little evidence of impact. The Development Associates report (1975) of the first round vocational education exemplary projects found "no meaningful relationships" between project continuation and replication of project results. The Rand study of school improvement programs

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[1]The views expressed in this paper are solely those of the author; they do not necessarily reflect the position of the sponsor, the U. S. Office of Education, an no official endorsement by USOE should be inferred.

across many funding sources found school districts with limited commitment to project objectives and their continuation. The COVERD Report (1976) emphasized the lack of documented evidence of the use of validated educational materials and activities. These statements indicate some of the problems identified when investigators study the spread of exemplary projects[2]. The project reported in this paper attempted to identify some of the administrative and organizational variables likely to influence the continuation of exemplary proejects in vocational education.

Study Objectives

Continuation was defined as remaining in existence after funds from outside of the organization were no longer available. The projects studied had been on their own funds for two to three years when this survey was completed. Two questions were addressed as objectives of the study:

1. What administrative techniques[3] or organizational arrangements[4] are likely to result in the continuation of the exemplary program on site when outside funds are no longer available?

2. What administrative techniques or organizational arrangements are likely to result in the program being implemented in school districts other than the host district?

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[2]These problems continue today. The Mitre Corporation is planning a symposium on the "Institutionalization of Federal Programs at the Local Level" for June 5-7, 1978. It is focused on questions such as how can Federal program development processes be improved; what conditions facilitate the spread of innovations; and how can we obtain the greatest impact from demonstration programs. More information about the symposium may be obtained from Eleanor Chelimsky, 1820 Dolly Madison Boulevard, McLean, Virginia 22101.

[3]Administrative techniques were considered to be methods or procedures which could be used by most project directors with the approval of the chief administrative officer such as the formation of an advisory committee.

[4]Organizational arrangements were considered to be administrative structure such as the staffing patterns of the project or the size of the school.

Steering committee members recommended emphasis be placed on the development of a demonstration guide for project directors in planning and conducting future programs. This was done; the resulting output was an eighteen-page report entitled Organizing and Conducting Demonstration Projects in Vocational Education. Last month, the information in this guide (Bina and Hull, 1978) was presented to a meeting of vocational education exemplary project directors.

The Research Context

The research findings on the effectiveness of demonstration sites are inconclusive. One of the more extensive studies of demonstration sites was conducted by House (1970). This study of twenty demonstration centers of the Illinois Gifted Program included a sample of 1100 teachers and administrators. House found:

> The fact that visitors valued the demonstration programs highly had little relationship with later adoption. Situational constraints in the adopting district seem to be of greater importance than the intrinsic characteristics of the demonstrated program or the process of demonstration itself. (p. 33).

The recommendations from this study suggest several variables for examination. Among them are: (1) the location of the demonstration center; (2) the selection and control of staff; and (3) the mode of operation.

The Rand (1975) findings indicated that the modes of the initiation stage were typically either opportunistic or problem-solving in nature. The projects which were successful in the implementation stage were characterized by mutual adaptation of innovations. Incorporation at the individual school building level was more likely to occur if an emphasis was placed on training for practical classroom issues and if the project used locally developed materials. Incorporation at the school district level was typically determined on the

basis of whether the project was successful, affordable, important to the district's priorities, and politically acceptable.

The Development Associates study (1975) investigated 50 sites of the exemplary projects. This study was completed prior to the termination of federal funds in some sites. This study suggested that the most likely reasons for the limited success of the exemplary projects included a lack of clearly defined objectives, definitions, and managerial procedures at both the project and federal levels.

McCaslin and others (1976) studied sixty-one research and development projects in Kentucky to determine their impact on school systems. Some of their findings were:

1. High impact projects use more objective data (tests, empirical data, etc.) to evaluate effectiveness while low impact projects use more subjective data (opinions, testimonials, site review teams).

2. High impact projects provide more adequate orientation for participants concerning their role in the project.

3. High impact projects involve participants more fully in project planning.

4. High impact projects have less turnover of project staff.

5. High impact projects have more directors from the district or regional level. (p. 76).

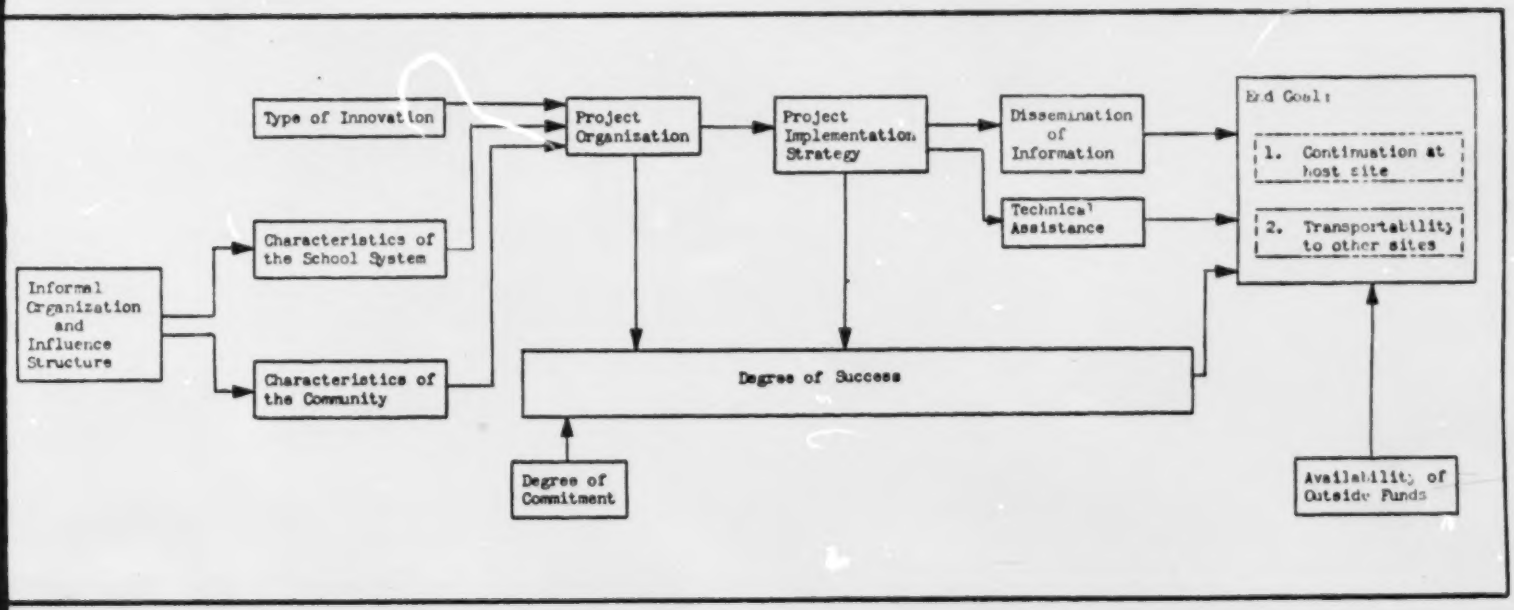
The research context forms the underlying dimensions for this study of vocational education exemplary projects. To understand the relationships among these and other variables, a conceptual framework was devised.

The Conceptual Framework

Numerous factors influence the stages (initiation, implementation, and continuation) of a demonstration project. Tasks in the demonstration process correspond generally to the stages. Categories for the independent variables were (1) characteristics of the community; (2) characteristics of the school

Figure 1

Conceptual Model for Demonstration Process



INITIATION ⟶ IMPLEMENTATION ⟶ CONTINUATION

system; and (3) project organization including project implementation strategy, dissemination of information and technical assistance.

This study was primarily interested in variables most likely to be subject to manipulation during the implementation of the exemplary project. The variables related to school district demographics and the community have less potential for being manipulated.

Characteristics of the community are important for the exemplary project to succeed. Rothman (1974) cites the importance of the quantity and quality of the school-community relationship as factors in the probability of a demonstration program's success.

The characteristics of the school system have multiple and sometimes conflicting influences on the exemplary project. Undoubtedly much of the behavior exhibited by school staff is the result of organizational constraints placed on them by their environment. Sieber (1968) has written a succinct statement of distinctive features of the educational system influencing innovation in school systems. Schools are vulnerable to the pressures exerted by representatives of community groups. Frequently these pressures are directed towards separate and conflicting goals. This leads to a condition of goal-diffuseness in most schools. The teaching staff serve in quasi-professional roles that do not allow control of their own destiny. And, finally, the degree of formal control is likely to influence the adoption of an innovation in school systems.

The size of the school district is an important factor to consider when implementing a demonstration project. The larger the district, the more likely the demonstration project is to have the potential for mobilizing necessary resources. This statement was supported by Brickell (1971) and substantiated by Baldridge and Burnham (1973). Zaltman, Duncan and Holbek (1973) cite the degree of formalization and centralization of the school organization as factors

which influence adoption of an innovation in school systems. According to Vroman and Watson (1974), the higher the level of project involvement in the organizational structure, the higher the probability of success. The history of success and/or failure of past innovations is likely to influence the behavior of the staff. The willingness of top administrators in a school system to endorse the demonstration project appears likely to influence the acceptance of the project by those it is intended to serve. The Rand Corporation Study (1975) indicated that a higher degree of administrative support specifically from the building principal would increase the probability of success of the project.

The project organization variables, implementation strategies, and dissemination activities were of primary interest in this study. The ability of school staff to launch a concerted, programmatic demonstration is likely to influence the use of exemplary materials and activities. The demonstration project staff must present a unified image to other professionals within the school and the school district as well as to visitors from other educational settings. Pincus (1974) poses three factors as determinants of innovation in schools: (1) bureaucratic safety, (2) responses to external pressure; and (3) approval of peer elites. It is necessary for demonstration project staff to project a sense of commitment and approval of the materials and activities being demonstrated. Communication of such beliefs should be conveyed frequently to school staff and to the community throughout the duration of the project.

Staffing patterns are likely to indicate a great deal about the commitment of the administration to the demonstration project. A study by Cohen and Bredo (1974) of organizational change in schools suggests:

> the critical issue for further research lies in the precise nature of the working relationships between staff members. . . our data analysis revealed that when we inquired about the precise way team members worked with each other and the way they divided their labor, we were able to make the most powerful predictions of all. (p. 14)

Specifically, Hetzel and Barnard (1973) indicated that the greater the percentage of full-time staff, the more likely the program is to succeed. Demonstration projects must be organized in an efficient manner allowing project staff to fulfill expectations for their roles in the school. McCaslin and others (1976), however, indicate the advantages of using part-time staff members to influence the success of the project.

The degree of project staff in-service is likely to influence project success. The Rand study (1975) cited increased staff in-service as an influence in continuation of the project.

The amount of technical assistance provided by the project staff to potential users of the materials and activities being demonstrated could determine the ultimate success of the project. Brickell (1971), enumerated a number of characteristics of the adoption setting that he believed to be important to the continued use of educational innovations. Among these factors are listed equipment, materials, facilities, and the capability of evaluating the innovation being demonstrated.

The Dependent Variable

Continuation at the host site is the measure of success for demonstration sites used in this study. Continuation is conceptualized as the use of materials and activities after the termination of federal funds. Recent studies have addressed this critical measure. A national study of the Elementary and Secondary Act Title III educational programs, conducted by Hearn (1970), found fifty to eighty-five percent of the programs continued, depending upon how the results were summarized. Many of those classified as "continuing" were being conducted at a lower level of budget, services, or other indicators of project size than

had been originally funded. The impact of the four hundred million dollars invested in Title III programs to stimulate innovation in education was dulled by this less-than-optimum continuation of these federally-financed programs.

The follow-up evaluation of the exemplary projects in the fifty sites conducted by Development Associates (1975) indicated continuation was frequently conducted at a lower level of budget and services than during the federally funded time period. The study was conducted in some sites during the last year of federal funding.

Methodology

The administrative and organizational variables were identified based on an examination of exemplary project records, a literature review, and interviews with exemplary project directors. A conceptual framework was developed and distributed for review by vocational education project directors at a national conference. A steering committee composed of an exemplary project director, a state research coordinating unit director, and an expert in innovation diffusion processes assisted with the project. They met twice during the conduct of the project--in the fall of 1975 to review the conceptual framework and select variables to be included in the instrumentation, and again in the fall of 1976 to review the findings and assist in the interpretation of the data. During the winter of 1976 they reviewed draft versions of the questionnaire.

Two populations were identified for this national study with the territories and non-contiguous states excluded due to extensive communication with the sites. The primary population consisted of exemplary project directors from projects funded between July 1, 1970, and June 30, 1973. The second population was the replication sites using results from the funded exemplary projects.

An instrument was developed for each of two populations: the exemplary project questionnaire concerning continuation had a 92 percent response rate.

The response rate from replication sites was fifty percent. Site visits to selected projects were conducted following the mail survey. Twenty-six individuals at seventeen different sites in eleven states were interviewed to aid in interpretation of the research study results.

Data were analyzed based on a simple frequency count tabulation of the results. The responses from the primary population were tabulated by three levels or degrees of continuation: low, medium and high. The site classifications depended upon their response to the continuation item of the host site questionnaire. It happened that sixteen of the sites had no continuation or a very low level of continuation, sixteen of the sites had full or expanded levels of continuation, and twenty-two of the sites had one-third or moderate levels of continuation. These categories were used in many of the tables to sort out the variables which appeared to be the most effective in the operation of a demonstration project.

More information about the instrumentation, sampling procedures, data collection and analyses may be found in the final report of the project by Hull and Bina (1977).

The results of this study should be viewed as preliminary and tentative for several reasons:

1. The universe of data was limited to the federally-administered exemplary projects funded under Public Law 90-576. These Part D projects were unique in that they were the initial demonstration sites.

2. This one-shot status study did not take into account changes which occurred over time at the project site.

3. Data collection activities occurred almost three years after the close of many of the federally-administered projects. Spot checks were made to the project sites to determine the validity of the mail questionnaire data. However, in every case known to the research staff, the questionnaires were completed by 1970-73 exemplary project staff persons.

4. The problems of recall and the judgment of the respondent may have been influenced by his/her prior association with the study.

Results

The results of this study are discussed in this paper by specific findings. The discussion examines both the positive and the negative influences on continuation suggested by the finding. Items which differentiate between sites with low levels of continuation and sites with high levels of continuation receive special attention. In few cases, the data suggest consistent, inverse relationships. For example, the Table 2 shows the presence of students on advisory committees tends to improve the chances of continuation and their absence discourages the likelihood of continuation. Tables of data will be used to support findings when they are warranted. Tables will be used sparingly since they are contained in the full report which is readily available on microfiche (ED 138-814).

Finding No. 1. Written position descriptions were developed for project staff prior to employment.

No relationship seemed to exist between written job descriptions and continuation. Forty-five of the fifty-four sites developed written position descriptions for staff prior to employment. This was noteworthy since these projects were the first federally-funded demonstration projects of their kind. This finding has neither positive nor negative implications for continuation since most of the projects wrote position descriptions.

Finding No. 2. The local school district was the primary source of funds for continuation of the demonstration project.

Over half of the fifty-four school districts surveyed indicated that the local district was the primary source of funds for continuing the demonstration project after federal funds were expended. Five of the districts continued the demonstration with other federal monies; four used state education agency funds, and seven obtained funds from intermediate education agencies. Nine districts used a combination of these sources or used other sources of funds

to continue the project, and three districts did not continue the demonstration in any form. Clearly, the local district is the most viable source for project continuation following the loss of demonstration funds.

Finding No. 3. Sites continuing with the demonstration project after federal funding tended to conduct a community survey.

Slightly more than half of the demonstration sites (29) conducted a community survey; however, only five of those sites conducting a survey were in the low continuation group while more than twice as many, eleven, of the no survey sites were in the low continuation group. This variable seemed to differentiate among continuation groups. Most of the surveys were conducted by members of a special task force recommended by the project directors.

The types of groups surveyed seemed to have an important influence in the continuation of a project on site. Table 1 indicates that only one of the sites surveying teachers and administrators fell in the low continuation group. Advisory council members generally were not surveyed. Asking questions of business, industry, and labor representatives tended to improve the chances of the demonstration site continuing. The results of the survey were most frequently reported to the superintendent, principals, and advisory council members.

Forty-six of the fifty-four demonstration projects formed advisory councils. Table 2 displays the most frequent composition of these councils. The more successful sites (those being continued) tended to place students and representatives of labor and business on advisory councils. The evidence in Tables 1 and 2 tend to corroborate Rothman's (1974) thesis that project success is associated with interaction between the school and the community.

Table 1

Number of Sites Indicating Groups Surveyed
By Degree of Continuation (N = 54)

Types of Groups Surveyed	Sites Surveying Groups			Sites Not Surveying Groups		
	L	M	H	L	M	H [1]
Teachers	0	10	8	16	12	8
Administrators	1	9	8	15	13	8
Parents	3	9	9	13	13	7
Advisory Council Members	0	5	4	16	17	12
Labor Representatives	2	10	6	14	12	10
Business/Industry Representatives	2	13	9	14	9	7
Other	1	2	4	15	20	12

[1]Sites are categorized by levels of continuation: low, medium, and high. Low sites continued at less than one-third levels of operation. Medium sites continued at one-third or moderate levels of operation. High sites continued at full or expanded levels of operation.

Note: All sites responded to each item.

Table 2

Number of Sites Indicating Types of Advisory Committee Members By Degree of Continuation (N = 54)

Types of Advisory Committee Members	Sites Using Members			Sites Not Using Members [1]		
	L	M	H	L	M	H
Teachers	10	16	13	6	6	3
Parents	11	14	10	5	8	6
Industry	11	17	12	5	5	4
Labor	6	12	11	10	10	5
Business	11	16	12	5	6	4
Students	3	8	10	13	14	6
Others	0	2	5	16	20	11

[1]For example, 15 sites indicated no teachers were used on advisory committees.

[2]Sites are categorized by levels of continuation: low, medium, and high. Low sites continued at less than one-third levels of operation. Medium sites continued at one-third or moderate levels of operation. High sites continued at full or expanded levels of operation.

Note: All sites responded to each item.

Finding No. 4. The use of an experienced project director tended to increase the probability of continuation on site.

Table 3 shows project directors' experiences in directing similar projects and in business/industry. This finding tended to be more visible for similar project experience than for business and industry experience. Undoubtedly, the credibility of an experienced project director made it easier to operate the project. The staffing pattern was stable. Thirty-one of the fifty-four sites had the same project director for the entire length of the project!

Table 3

Number of Sites Indicating Project Director Experience By Degree of Continuation

	Types of Project Director's Experience					
	In Directing Similar Projects			In Business and Industry		
Years of Experience	L	M	H	L	M	H [1]
Over three years	2	7	9	7	14	11
3 years or less	12	12	7	4	6	5
Blanks	2	3	0	5	2	0
Total	16	22	16	16	22	16

[1]Sites are categorized by levels of continuation: low, medium, and high. Low sites continued at less than one-third levels of operation. Medium sites continued at one-third or moderate levels of operation. High sites continued at full or expanded levels of operation.

Finding No. 5. Most demonstration projects held staff meetings once a week.

The need for frequent communication among project staff can be deduced from evidence in Table 4. A vast majority of the sites held staff meetings once a week. Meeting once every two weeks or less seemed to diminish the chances of project continuation. Frequent staff meetings provide the opportunity to plan together.

Table 4

Number of Sites with Frequency of Project Staff Meetings By Degree of Continuation

Frequency of Project Staff Meetings	Degree of Continuation[1] L	M	H
Once a Week or More Often	8	16	13
Once Every Two Weeks or Less	8	6	3
Total	16	22	16

[1]Sites are categorized by levels of continuation: low, medium, and high. Low sites continued at less than one-third levels of operation. Medium sites continued at one-third or moderate levels of operation. High sites continued at full or expanded levels of operation.

Finding No. 6. Most of the sites conducted from one to six hours of in-service education per month with the school staff.

All of the demonstration projects conducted in-service sessions. They tended to conduct them at least once a month. The total hours spent in in-service per month ranged from an average of less than one hour to 10 hours or more.

Finding No. 7. Project director interactions with others tended to be informal if they interacted more than once a month.

Informal communication tended to be verbal rather than written, and it tended to occur with school staff and community representatives more frequently than with board members and the superintendent.

Communication with key leaders in the community is important to a project. The Rand (1975) report emphasized the key role of the project director in building relationships with agencies and departments both internal and external to the project.

Finding No. 8. Those sites most likely to continue the demonstration, collected evaluation data more frequently than those sites least likely to continue.

The high continuation sites collected evaluation data once a month or more often as indicated in Table 5. A straight line relationship existed between the frequency of data collection and the likelihood of continuation on site. Frequent data collection sites (once a month or more often) tended to continue at a high level, while low data collectors (once every six months) tended to fall in the low continuation level.

Finding No. 9. Despite extensive use of a wide variety of dissemination strategies, no relationship appeared to exist between the type of strategy used and the continuation of the demonstration project on site.

No association existed between types of dissemination strategies used and the likelihood of continuation. The relationships approximate a normal curve in almost every case! Not only did few differences exist between the sites using strategies and sites not using strategies, but no differences were found among the types of dissemination strategies: printed messages, verbal messages, and technical assistance either on site (in the local community) or when the strategies were directed toward other sites.

Table 5

Number of Sites Collecting Evaluation Data
By Degree of Continuation (N = 54)

Frequency of On-Site Evaluation Data Collection	Degree of Continuation L	M	H	Total [1]
Once a Month or More Often	1	3	9	13
Once Every Three Months	11	10	6	27
Once Every Six Months or Year	4	9	1	14
Total	16	22	16	54

[1]Sites are categorized by levels of continuation: low, medium, and high. Low sites continued at less than one-third levels of operation. Medium sites continued at one-third or moderate levels of operation. High sites continued at full or expanded levels of operation.

There are several alternative explanations for these results: (1) the strategies may in fact make very little difference in the acceptance of exemplary results; (2) the dissemination strategies need to be improved before they have much impact on project results; or (3) the instrument was not sufficiently precise to measure the effects of the strategies.

Finding No. 10. Awareness of the exemplary projects tended to flow through administrative channels.

State education agency officials, information from colleagues, and printed information from the exemplary project site were most frequently identified as sources of exemplary site information by respondents from the replication sites.

A spurious relationship may be present in these data because state education personnel were invited to nominate replication sites for this survey. This nomination could have caused the site personnel to list state education officials as sources of information due to established lines of communication.

Superintendents of schools and vocational education directors were responsible for encouraging the initial contact with the exemplary site. It was the superintendent of schools and the vocational education director who most frequently received information about the exemplary project. Thus, they were in the best position to encourage the initial contact.

In almost half of the replication sites responding no one from the exemplary project visited the site. The replication site received no personal assistance from the host exemplary project! This indicates a certain isolation among school districts which inhibits the flow of innovative ideas across school district lines. In fact, most of the replication sites responding to this survey were non-adjacent to the exemplary project school district. Most sites were within the state where the exemplary site was located.

Finding No. 11. Consultation was the most frequent type of assistance received by replication site personnel.

Twenty-six of the thirty-nine replication sites responding reported the use of consultation assistance from the exemplary site. Consultation was the most frequent type of assistance provided by state departments of education, colleges and universities. Almost half of the exemplary projects personnel encouraged inservice sessions and visitations to their exemplary project.

Summary

The results from this study tend to corroborate findings from other research. Sites most likely to continue the exemplary project tended to collect evaluation data more frequently than those sites less likely to continue.

This finding supports the Development Associates recommendation for increased evaluation. Continuation was associated with the use of experienced project directors and frequent inservice for staff. The Rand study reached similar conclusions. Local school districts were the primary source of funds for continuation of demonstration projects. Transportability of project results usually occurred through administrative channels and technical assistance to replication sites occurred on a limited basis.

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